

What is claimed is:

1. A transaction intermediary apparatus comprising:
a memory;

5 record writing means for writing a record of a sale offer into said memory in response to entry by a potential seller through an information processing device and for writing a record of a purchase offer into said memory in response to entry by a potential buyer through an information processing device, said sale offer record including information descriptive of a commodity for sale
10 the seller offers and a lowest allowable selling price of said commodity for sale set by the seller, said purchase offer record including information descriptive of a desired commodity the buyer wants to buy and a highest allowable buying price of said desired commodity set by the buyer; and

extracting means for searching said memory with a plurality of sale and
15 purchase offer records stored therein for extracting records of sale and purchase offers which match in conditions relating to the commodities and prices, and determining a selling price to be presented to the seller and a buying price to be presented to the buyer of the commodity in the extracted sale offer record, from the lowest allowable selling price in the extracted sale offer
20 record and the highest allowable buying price in the extracted purchase offer record, said determined selling price being not higher than said determined buying price;

said extracting means writing the commodity descriptive information of
said extracted sale offer record and said determined buying price, into said
25 extracted purchase offer record in said memory.

2. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said record writing means further writes an intermediation record into said memory, said intermediation record correlating said extracted matching sale and purchase
30 offer records.

3. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the selling price is determined in accordance with a category of the commodity for sale and/or a buying and selling history of the seller, and said buying price is determined in accordance with a category of the commodity for sale and/or a buying and selling history of the buyer.

4. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the buyer and the seller are first required to be registered as a member with said apparatus, and said apparatus further comprises registering means for determining whether to permit an applicant to be a member based on information about a member history of the applicant if the applicant was once a member.

5. The apparatus according to Claim 1 further comprising:
means responsive to a buyer's request made through an information processing device for providing a content of the purchase offer record of the buyer to the information processing device, and responsive to a seller's request made through an information processing device for providing a content of the sale offer record of the seller to the information processing device; and

means responsive to decision to buy the commodity for sale described in the extracted purchase offer record for writing the determined selling price of the commodity into the extracted sale offer record.

6. The apparatus according to Claim 1 further comprising means responsive to payment for the commodity to be bought for instructing a deliverer to receive and deliver the commodity.

7. A transaction intermediary apparatus comprising:
a memory;

means for writing a record of a sale offer into said memory in response to

entry by a potential seller through an information processing device and writing a sale status into the sale offer record, said sale offer record including information descriptive of a commodity for sale the seller offers and a lowest allowable selling price of said commodity for sale set by the seller, said writing means writing a record of a purchase offer into said memory in response to entry by a potential buyer through an information processing device and writing a purchase status into said purchase offer record, said purchase offer record including information descriptive of a desired commodity the buyer wants to buy and a highest allowable buying price of said desired commodity set by the buyer; and

extracting means for searching said memory with a plurality of sale and purchase offer records stored therein for extracting records of sale and purchase offers which match in conditions relating to the commodities and prices, and determining a selling price to be presented to the seller and a buying price to be presented to the buyer of the commodity in the extracted sale offer record, from the lowest allowable selling price in the extracted sale offer record and the highest allowable buying price in the extracted purchase offer record, said determined selling price being not higher than said determined buying price;

said extracting means writing the commodity descriptive information of said extracted sale offer record and the determined buying price, into the extracted purchase offer record in said memory, and modifying the purchase status of the extracted purchase offer record;

said apparatus further comprising answering means responsive to a buyer's request made through an information processing device for providing a content of the purchase offer record of the buyer to the information processing device.

8. The apparatus according to Claim 7 further comprising:

processing means responsive to decision to buy the commodity for sale

described in the extracted purchase offer record for modifying the purchase status in the extracted purchase record, writing the determined selling price of the commodity into the extracted sale offer record, and modifying the sale status in the extracted sale offer record;

5 said answering means being responsive to a seller's request through an information processing device for providing a content of the sale offer record of the seller to the information processing device.

9. The apparatus according to Claim 7 or 8 wherein:

10 said extracting means searches the remainder of said plurality of purchase offer records stored in said memory for extracting another record of a purchase offer matching the sale offer of said extracted sale offer record in conditions relating to the commodities and prices, and determining another selling price and another buying price of the commodity in the extracted sale offer record, from the lowest allowable selling price in the extracted sale offer
15 record and another highest allowable buying price in the extracted another purchase offer record, said determined another selling price is not higher than said determined another buying price; and

20 said extracting means further writes the commodity descriptive information of the extracted sale offer record and the determined another buying price of the commodity into the extracted another purchase offer record in said memory, and modifies the purchase status in the extracted another purchase offer record.

25 10. A transaction intermediary apparatus for mediating between a potential buyer and a potential seller, comprising:

 a memory including a memory region externally accessible to said buyer and said seller, and a memory region externally inaccessible to said buyer and seller;

30 acceptor means responsive to entry to said apparatus by said seller for

writing into said externally accessible memory region, a sale offer including a description of a commodity for sale offered by said seller and a lowest allowable selling price set by the seller, and responsive to entry to said apparatus by said buyer for writing into said externally accessible memory region, a purchase offer including a description of a commodity the seller wants to buy and a higher allowable buying price set by the buyer; and

extractor means for searching sale and purchase offers stored in said memory for extracting candidate sale and purchase offers matching in conditions relating to commodities and prices, and determining selling and buying prices of the commodity for sale in the candidate sale offer to be presented to the seller and the buyer, respectively, based on the lowest allowable selling price in the candidate sale offer and the highest allowable buying price in the candidate purchase offer, said determined selling price being not higher than said determined buying price;

said extractor means writing the commodity description of the candidate sale offer and the determined buying price, into the region of said memory where said candidate purchase offer is written.

11. The apparatus according to Claim 10 wherein said acceptor means writes an intermediary record for relating the matching candidate sale and purchase offers with each other into said externally inaccessible memory region of said memory.

12. The apparatus according to Claim 10 or 11 wherein said selling price is determine in accordance with a category of the commodity for sale and/or a buying and selling history of the seller, and said buying price is determined in accordance with a category of the commodity for sale and/or a buying and selling history of the buyer.

13. The apparatus according to one of Claims 10, 11 and 12 wherein

the buyer and the seller are first required to be registered as a member with said apparatus, and said apparatus further comprises registering means for determining whether to permit an applicant to be a member based on information about a member history of the applicant if the applicant was once a member.

14. The apparatus according to one of Claims 10, 11, 12 and 13, further comprising:

means responsive to a buyer's request for providing a content of the purchase offer of the buyer, and responsive to a seller's request for providing a content of the sale offer of the seller; and

means responsive to decision to buy the commodity for sale in the extracted candidate purchase offer for writing the determined selling price of the commodity of the sale offer into the region of said memory where said candidate purchase offer is written.

15. The apparatus according to Claim 14 further comprising means responsive to payment for the commodity to be bought for instructing a deliverer to receive and deliver the commodity.

16. The apparatus according to one of Claims 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 wherein the description of the commodity comprises a digital photograph of the commodity.

17. A program stored in a recording medium for transaction intermediation for use in an information processing apparatus, said information processing apparatus including a memory and a processor, said program causing said processor to perform the steps of:

writing a record of a sale offer into said memory in response to entry by a potential seller, said sale offer record including information descriptive of a

commodity for sale the seller offers and a lowest allowable selling price of said commodity for sale set by the seller;

writing a record of a purchase offer into said memory in response to entry by a potential buyer, said purchase offer record including information descriptive of a desired commodity the buyer wants to buy and a highest allowable buying price of said desired commodity set by the buyer;

searching said memory with a plurality of sale and purchase offer records stored therein for extracting records of sale and purchase offers which match in conditions relating to the commodities and prices;

determining a selling price to be presented to the seller and a buying price to be presented to the buyer of the commodity in the extracted sale offer record, based on the lowest allowable selling price in the extracted sale offer record and the highest allowable buying price in the extracted purchase offer record, said determined selling price being not higher than said determined buying price; and

writing the commodity descriptive information of the extracted sale offer record and the determined buying price, into the extracted purchase offer record in said memory.

18. The program according to Claim 17 wherein said step of writing a record of a purchase offer includes writing an intermediary record for relating the extracted matching sale and purchase offer records with each other into said memory.

19. The program according to Claim 17 wherein said program causes said processor to perform the further steps of:

providing a content of the purchase offer record of a potential buyer in response to the buyer's request;

providing a content of the sale offer record of a potential seller in response to the seller's request; and

writing the determined selling price of the commodity into the extracted sale offer record in response to decision to buy the commodity for sale described in the extracted purchase offer record.

5 20. The program according to Claim 17 wherein said program causes said processor to perform the further step of instructing a deliverer to receive and deliver the commodity in response to payment for the commodity to be bought.

10 21. A program stored in a recording medium for transaction intermediation for an information processing apparatus, said apparatus including a memory and a processor, said program causing said processor to perform the steps of:

15 writing a record of a sale offer into said memory in response to entry by a potential seller and writing a sale status into the sale offer record, said sale offer record including information descriptive of a commodity for sale the seller offers and a lowest allowable selling price of said commodity for sale set by the seller;

20 writing a record of a purchase offer into said memory in response to entry by a potential buyer and writing a purchase status into said purchase offer record, said purchase offer record including information descriptive of a desired commodity the buyer wants to buy and a highest allowable buying price of said desired commodity set by the buyer;

25 searching said memory with a plurality of sale and purchase offer records stored therein for extracting records of sale and purchase offers which match in conditions relating to the commodities and prices;

30 determining a selling price to be presented to the seller and a buying price to be presented to the buyer, of the commodity in the extracted sale offer record, based on the lowest allowable selling price in the extracted sale offer record and the highest allowable buying price in the extracted purchase offer

record, said determined selling price being not higher than said determined buying price;

writing the commodity descriptive information of said extracted sale offer record and the determined buying price, into the extracted purchase offer record in said memory, and modifying the purchase status of the extracted purchase offer record; and

providing a content of the purchase offer record of the buyer in response to a buyer's request.

22. The program according to Claim 21 wherein said program causes said processor to perform the further steps of:

modifying the purchase status in the extracted purchase record in response to decision to buy the commodity for sale described in the extracted purchase offer record, writing the determined selling price of the commodity into the extracted sale offer record, and modifying the sale status in the extracted sale offer record; and

providing a content of the sale offer record of the seller in response to a seller's request.

23. The program according to Claim 21 or 22 wherein:

said step of searching includes searching said memory for extracting another record of a purchase offer matching the sale offer of said extracted sale offer record in conditions relating to the commodities and prices; and

said step of determining includes determining another selling price and another buying price of the commodity in the extracted sale offer record, from the lowest allowable selling price in the extracted sale offer record and another highest allowable buying price in the extracted another purchase offer record, said determined another selling price being not higher than said determined another buying price; and

said step of writing the commodity descriptive information and

determined buying price includes writing the commodity descriptive information of the extracted sale offer record and the determined another buying price, into the extracted another purchase offer record in said memory, and modifying the purchase status in the extracted another purchase offer record.

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24. A price determining method in a transaction intermediation apparatus for receiving desired conditions for transactions from a potential buyer and a potential seller and mediating between the buyer and seller, comprising the steps of:

10 allowing the buyer and the seller to present ranges of allowable prices for commodities or services that the buyer and the seller are interested in;

retrieving a potential buyer and a potential seller presenting overlapping ranges of allowable prices;

15 determining a selling price and a buying price higher than the selling price, said selling and buying prices being within the overlap of said overlapping ranges of allowable prices; and

presenting said determined selling price to said retrieved seller and presenting said determined buying price to said retrieved buyer.